T/SOR/23/1/8

EGLINTON HUNT

HUNT SABOTEURS

As I expect you are aware, we have had regular visits this season from the Saboteurs, resulting in some extremely unpleasant incidents.

Your Committee is naturally very concerned about this, and I am writing to you to explain the current situation and to give your Committee's advice on what to do if an incident occurs.

Firstly, as regards Ayr division of Strathclyde Police (which covers all the hunting country South of a line between Irvine and Kilmarnock excluding Caprington and the Galston country) an Inspector Vogwell of Prestwick Police has been appointed to look into all complaints that have already been made, and there have been quite a number, and to prepare a report for the Commander of the division about the whole Hunt Saboteur/Hunting situation.

Police advice to date is that they will investigate and report to the procurator fiscal cases where there are examples of:

a) obscene language (a breach of the peace) where there is a minimum of one other witness

b) threatening behaviour - a number of instances have occurred where individual members of the field, car followers or hunt staff haave been threatened in one way or another, either by being told they would be: attacked later, or, in the case of children, followed to school, or their way barred by saboteurs who would not let the children pass unless they promised never to hunt again! - so long as there is one other witness to the incident

or c) either of the above where there are no witnesses, but where other very similar instances have occurred involving the same offenders.

As far as direct interference with the activities of the Hunt are concerned, we are currently making representations to the Police that a saboteur blowing a hunting horn is a breach of the peace, in the same way that someone running onto a football pitch blowing a whistle is committing a breach of the peace. Apparently the Police's views on this will be largely coloured by the view of the Procurator Fiscal.

In the meantime your Committee's advice if one of the incidents outlined above, or indeed any other serious incident occurs is:

a) do **NOT** retaliate. I know that this is easier said than done, but this is exactly the reaction that the Saboteurs want, so do not give them that satisfaction. In any case if we are to win the support and co-operation of the Police, we must behave in an impeccable manner and show that the

cause of the very considerable waste of the Police's valuable time lies squarely with the Saboteurs.

b) note who is with you at the time to make sure that you know who your witnesses are, if any

c) a car phone will be available with a car follower on every hunting day, so if you can get to this phone quickly, report to the nearest main Police Station - Ayr, Kilmarnock, Irvine. Make sure that they understand that you are making an official complaint, and ALSO report the incident to me.

d) If you cannot get near the car phone quickly, then in: Ayr Division - simply report the matter to me as quickly as possible with full details, and I will make a formal complaint on your behalf to Inspector Vogwell.

Kilmarnock/Irvine areas - report it to either Kilmarnock or Irvine Police Station as soon as possible, and also report it to me. It is essential that we have a central list of incidents.

We are very keen to photograph the Saboteurs at each meet for the purposes of identification should an incident occur, and we would be glad to hear from volunteers to do this on either a regular or rota basis. I would also be very grateful for copies of photographs anyone already has of the saboteurs, preferably with the date of the day on which they were taken.

Ronald W Alexander

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